

The Sattvic diet

HEALTH
HUB



Many people who practice yoga favour the Sattvic diet given its roots in Ayurveda, a medicinal system that originated in India over 5,000 years ago.

Followers of the Sattvic diet primarily consume nutritious foods, including fresh produce and nuts, which is why this diet may lead to several health benefits. However, it's quite restrictive, and many healthy foods are off-limits.

WHAT IS THE SATTVIC DIET?

The Sattvic diet is a high fibre, low fat vegetarian diet followed by many yoga enthusiasts. In the practice of Yoga, there are three types of foods that have varying qualities and health effects: sattvic, rajasic, and tamasic.

The word sattvic means "pure essence," and sattvic foods are thought to be pure and balanced, offering feelings of calmness, happiness, and mental clarity. Rajasic foods are described as overly stimulating, and tamasic foods are believed to increase weakness and laziness.

Out of the three types, sattvic foods are considered the most nutritious, and Sattvic diets are associated with a high intake of micronutrients. According to many yoga enthusiasts, the Sattvic diet is the best choice for promoting longevity, physical strength, and mental health.

This may be because Sattvic diets are rich in fresh, nutrient-dense foods, including fruits, vegetables, sprouted whole grains, fresh fruit juices, legumes, nuts, seeds, honey, and herbal teas.

Animal proteins, fried foods, stimulants like caffeine, and white sugar are just some of the foods that are excluded when following a Sattvic dietary pattern.

POTENTIAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF THE SATTVIC DIET

The Sattvic diet is rich in nutrient-dense foods and low in processed foods. For these reasons, it may offer many health benefits.

✓ PROMOTES WHOLE, NUTRIENT-DENSE FOODS

The Sattvic diet is based on consuming whole, nutritious foods, including vegetables, fruits, beans, and nuts. Consuming these whole, nutrient-dense foods can help promote overall health by providing your body with protein, healthy fats, fibre, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that are essential for maintaining proper bodily function.

The Sattvic diet encourages eating healthy, whole foods and discourages the consumption of fried and processed foods. Diets high in processed foods are known to harm overall health and significantly increase the risk of numerous diseases.

✓ MAY REDUCE CHRONIC DISEASE RISK

Although no research has been conducted on the Sattvic diet specifically, it's well known that diets promoting whole, nutrient-dense foods generally reduce the overall risk of developing chronic conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers.

Vegetarian dietary patterns have been shown to offer an impressive protective effect against chronic disease development. For example, vegetarian diets are associated with significantly lower levels of heart disease risk factors like high blood pressure and high LDL (bad) cholesterol. Additionally, vegetarian dietary patterns may protect against diabetes and colorectal cancer.

What's more, eating the foods that comprise the majority of the Sattvic diet, including beans, vegetables, fruits, and nuts, may decrease your risk of chronic disease and early death by all causes.

✓ MAY PROMOTE WEIGHT LOSS

The Sattvic diet is rich in fibre and plant foods, which may help promote weight loss.

Studies have shown that people who follow vegetarian dietary patterns typically have lower body mass indexes and less body fat, compared with nonvegetarians. Many studies have also shown that vegetarian diets promote weight loss in overweight individuals.

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This may be due to several factors, including the high fibre content and reduced calorie density of vegetarian diets.

POTENTIAL NEGATIVES

Although the Sattvic diet offers many benefits, there are some drawbacks to consider.

- ✗ While the Sattvic diet is rich in nutrient-dense foods, it cuts out many healthy foods. For example, followers of the Sattvic diet are encouraged to forgo meat, poultry, fish, and eggs — all of which are excellent sources of protein, healthy fats, and various micronutrients.
- ✗ Additionally, the Sattvic diet excludes foods that are considered rajasic or tamasic. While some foods in these categories, such as high fat fried foods and added sugars, are unhealthy, many of them are not. Radishes, chili peppers, onions, and mushrooms are just some examples of exceptionally healthy foods that are off-limits on the Sattvic diet simply because they fall into the rajasic or tamasic categories.
- ✗ Coffee, caffeinated tea, and alcohol are also off-limits on the Sattvic diet, which may make this eating pattern difficult to follow for those who enjoy these beverages.

Although the Sattvic diet principles are based on beliefs, they're not necessarily based on scientific research. Therefore, some of the restrictions are likely unnecessary.

FOODS TO EAT

When following the Sattvic diet, you must eat only approved foods and avoid foods in the rajasic and tamasic categories. Keep in mind that recommendations regarding what foods are considered Sattvic vary depending on the source, and many sources contradict one another in terms of what foods are allowed. The following foods can be eaten liberally on the Sattvic diet:

- ✓ **LAND AND SEA VEGETABLES:** spinach, carrots, celery, potatoes, broccoli, kelp, lettuce, peas, cauliflower, etc.
- ✓ **FRUITS AND FRUIT JUICES:** apples, bananas, papaya, mangos, cherries, melons, peaches, guava, fresh fruit juices, etc.
- ✓ **SPROUTED GRAINS:** barley, amaranth, bulgur,

barley, millet, quinoa, wild rice, etc.

- ✓ **NUTS, SEEDS, AND COCONUT PRODUCTS:** walnuts, pecans, Brazil nuts, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, unsweetened coconut, flax seeds, etc.
- ✓ **FATS AND OILS:** olive oil, sesame oil, red palm oil, flax oil, ghee, etc.
- ✓ **DAIRY AND NON-DAIRY PRODUCTS:** high quality milk, yogurt, and cheese, such as pasture-raised products, almond milk, coconut milk, cashew milk, nut, and seed-based cheeses.
- ✓ **LEGUMES AND BEAN PRODUCTS:** lentils, mung beans, chickpeas, bean sprouts, tofu, etc.
- ✓ **BEVERAGES:** water, fruit juice, noncaffeinated herbal tea.
- ✓ **SATTVIC SPICES AND HERBS:** coriander, basil, nutmeg, cumin, fenugreek, turmeric, ginger, etc.
- ✓ **SWEETENERS:** honey and jaggery.

The above foods should make up most of your intake when following the Sattvic diet. Keep in mind that there are stricter and looser variations of the diet.

FOODS TO AVOID

The Sattvic diet discourages the consumption of foods that are considered rajasic or tamasic. For this reason, most animal products, highly processed foods, refined sugar, and fried foods are restricted. The following foods and ingredients should be avoided on the Sattvic diet:

- ✗ **ADDED SUGAR AND SWEETS:** white sugar, high fructose corn syrup, candy, soda, etc.
- ✗ **FRIED FOODS:** French fries/chips, fried vegetables, fried pastries, etc.
- ✗ **PROCESSED FOODS:** chips, sugary breakfast cereals, fast food, frozen dinners, microwave meals, etc.
- ✗ **REFINED GRAIN PRODUCTS:** white bread, bagels, cakes, cookies, etc.
- ✗ **MEAT, FISH, EGGS, AND POULTRY:** chicken, beef, turkey, duck, lamb, fish, shellfish, whole eggs, egg white, animal-based products like collagen, etc.



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- ✗ **CERTAIN VEGETABLES AND FRUITS:** onion, durian, scallions, pickles, and garlic.
- ✗ **CERTAIN BEVERAGES:** alcohol, sugary drinks, and caffeinated beverages like coffee.

Generally, foods that are overly sour, salty, or spicy should be avoided. Additionally, stale foods, such as foods left out overnight, are considered tamasic and should be avoided.

3-DAY SAMPLE MENU

A healthy Sattvic diet should include plenty of produce, beans, and whole grains. According to most sources, high quality dairy can be consumed in moderation. Here is a 3-day Sattvic diet-approved menu.

DAY 1

- **BREAKFAST:** sprouted quinoa porridge with almond milk, berries, flax seeds, and unsweetened coconut.
- **LUNCH:** chickpea and vegetable bowl with tahini dressing.
- **DINNER:** mung bean, tofu, and wild rice stew.

DAY 2

- **BREAKFAST:** grass-fed yogurt with berries, walnuts, and cinnamon.
- **LUNCH:** salad with fresh vegetables, tofu, lentils, and paneer cheese.
- **DINNER:** chickpea and vegetable coconut curry.

DAY 3

- **BREAKFAST:** oatmeal with stewed peaches and cashew butter.
- **LUNCH:** quinoa salad with sweet potatoes, bean sprouts, and kale.
- **DINNER:** mango rice with chickpeas and coconut milk.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The Sattvic diet is a vegetarian diet that's based on Ayurvedic principles and popular among yoga enthusiasts.

Those who follow a Sattvic dietary pattern should avoid foods considered rajasic or tamasic like meat, eggs, refined sugar, spicy foods, and fried foods.

Although the Sattvic diet includes many healthy foods and may offer some health benefits, it's highly restrictive and not based on science. For these reasons, it may be best to follow a less restrictive, plant-centric diet instead.